

*"I believe that Congress must raise the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour to help lift every minimum wage worker out of poverty. Today and together, we can begin to restore a balance, by rewarding work and not just wealth..."*

Washington, DC -- Today, Rep. Peter Welch spoke on the House floor in support of raising the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour.

The minimum wage increase, H.R. 2, is currently being debated and final passage is expected later today. Congress last voted to increase the minimum wage to \$5.15 in 1995.

An estimated 14.9 million workers will receive a raise as a result of the legislation.

A full-time minimum wage worker currently earns just \$10,712 annually, more than \$2,000 below the poverty line for a family of two (Economics Policy Institute, January 2006). Raising the wage to \$7.25 would allow a full-time minimum wage worker to earn about \$2,000 above the poverty line.

The following statement was submitted for the Congressional Record:

**Peter Welch - Restoring Balance and Making Work Pay - 1.10.07**

\$2.32 for a gallon of gas.

\$2.99 for a gallon of milk.

\$20 or \$25 for a *single* day of childcare.

These are real prices, *and too often real choices*, that working Americans face every day.

In Vermont, and across America, we have a proud tradition of self-reliance and sense of community. We need to combine those two values - self reliance on one hand and community on the other - by rewarding work and making work pay.

We send a message every day to our citizens and our workers that we value work and that government has a role to play in ensuring opportunity to everyone willing to contribute. It is time we matched that message with our own leadership.

It is no accident that Vermont and more than 20 states around the country - Republican and Democrats working together - have led in the effort to reward work with a reasonable minimum wage above our national minimum last set nearly a decade ago.

There are few more important tasks before us than addressing the growing economic gap between America's wealthiest citizens and low income workers.

Last year, millionaires were given tax breaks that put an average of \$40,000 in their pockets, and yet middle class workers who earn less than \$20,000 received just two dollars. *Two dollars*  
- for the  
whole year. That is rewarding wealth rather than work.

Today a full-time minimum wage worker earns just \$10,712 annually - more than \$2,000 *below* the poverty line for a family of two. Asking millions of our neighbors to work full time without a wage above poverty is wrong.

I believe that Congress must raise the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour to help *lift every minimum wage worker out of poverty*  
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Today and together, we can begin to restore a balance, by rewarding work and not just wealth, acknowledging we are all in this together.